o promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which here in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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The Kingdom of God in Everyday Living

By Aaron H. Rapking*

"You speak as though God were an everyday God." This statement was made t a week-end community life conference by a county extension agent who had had ears of experience in helping people and communities achieve more of the abundant life. He evidently thought of God as a Sunday God interested only in the souls of nen, with little or no concern for their minds and bodies.

It has always been true, and still is an evident fact, that one of the greatest problems confronting individuals, families, communities, and all members of God's family is the blurred conception of the right relationship between the spiritual and material phases of life. This confusion is one of, if not the greatest, hindrance toward realizing the Kingdom of God in the world.

What then is the Kingdom of God? What did Jesus have in mind as he challenged those who listened to him in Galilee, and what does he have in mind as he challenges us now? "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you." What does it mean to pray: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven"? What do we expect will happen in our homes, on our farms, in our factories, in the countryside, in our towns and cities, and in the world as we pray: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven"?

The Kingdom of God is the master plan for every individual, for every nome, for every community, for the church, for the school, for industry, for agriculture, for commerce, and for every phase of everyday normal living. It has to do with food, clothing, shelter, education, religion, recreation, health, relationships within ourselves, our homes, our communities, with God, and with the whole world.

The Kingdom of God is the master plan for the universe. Keeping the stars in their courses, making available the life-giving rays of the sun, keeping in order the great water system consisting of clouds, rain, creeks, rivers, and oceans, directing plant and animal life, the changing seasons -- these are all phases of the master plan for the universe.

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*Dr. Rapking has made invaluable contributions to our concept of the Kingdom of God in rural life. We appreciate this clear statement from him because we realize that he lives as he writes. Dr. Rapking is now Director of Rural Life and Community Services at Hiwassee College, Madisonville, Tennessee. -- I. W. Moomaw

Get into an airplane, and as you fly over your community, what is your highest desire for the homes, the farms, economic and social relationships, the church, the schools, that will help those living in the community to live the best life it is possible for them to live? Then, get down out of the air, and as you go about doing the everyday tasks according to the Kingdom of God way, you will be a Kingdom builder.

The Kingdom of God was in the mind of God as he set out to create the universe as a place and a way for realizing his plans for you and me and for all mankind.

The Kingdom of God is coming to the extent that you and I and others discover and do God's will, as we live day by day in all our relationships in the home, the field, and the market place.

The Kingdom of God will be the ideal, the guiding star, the blueprint, the master plan as long as people continue to live in the world.

The physical body provides the home for the spiritual self which God would see developed. No doubt God could have made us angels or spirits at once so that we would not have needed our bodies as a base for growing our souls. The laws that have to do with living in our bodies are just as real as the hand with which I am pushing the pencil across the page. The heart that pumps the blood through my body is a very important instrument of the Kingdom of God. Anything that I do consciously or unconsciously, which makes it difficult for my heart to function normally and in accordance with God's will, to that extent hinders the coming of the Kingdom of God in my life and in the world. So closely is our common life related to the high purposes of God.

Our need for a doctor is an indication that in some way we have broken the laws of the Kingdom for our bodies. The food we eat can be a great help or hindrance in our obeying or disobeying the laws of health. Science is helping us get a clearer concept of the relationship of eroded soils, eroded bodies, and eroded souls. If the minerals that our bodies need are not in the soil, they can not come to us by way of the food we eat. Plants cannot manufacture the minerals they can only use those which are available in the soil.

Our bodies require a certain amount of rest. Wholesome sleeping habits are essential toward obeying the laws of health. Right attitudes toward our work and, as needed, wholesome recreation are also basic factors in obeying the Kingdom's laws for our bodies.

There is a best way for us to use our minds. The right use of our mind is essential in acquiring knowledge, in evaluating our experiences, in giving direction to the use we make of the energy our bodies produce. The mind is a big factor in making plans, in setting goals, and in taking steps toward achieving those goals.

Children want to know and ask many questions about life, their relationship to others and to God. Blessed are those children whose parents help them keep alive a sense of curiosity, a desire to know.

The ways we use our minds in developing our ability to observe and to evaluate our experiences are great factors in the building of the world in which we live. To read good books, magazines, and literature that have stood the test of time, to make a consistent and earnest effort to come to grips with reality,

to rejoice in all the secrets the scientists are discovering, and to appreciate good food, a good bed to sleep in, a comfortable home, the radio, the refrigerator, electric lights -- these all contribute toward using our minds God's way.

There is a best way for us to live for the growth of our souls. That way involves our relationship to our bodies, our minds, our God, others, and the world. The intimate relationships of our souls, so closely related to our bodies, our minds, and others, along with our faith in God as the planner of these relationships, are very important factors in giving meaning and significance to everyday living. It is our faith in God, in others, our ideals, our attitudes, our love for others, our vision, and our sense of mission and destiny that are basic in the growing of our souls. This way has to do with the way we use our minds and the way we obey or disobey the laws of life for our bodies. Souls are not grown in a vacuum. Our eyes, ears, hands, feet, stomachs, and hearts are all factors in the growing of our souls. There is no roosting place out in space somewhere for our souls. The same God who planned the way for the growing of our souls planned the best way for our bodies and our minds. God is indeed an everyday God.

Our homes are basic in the master plan for the world. It is by way of the home that we start the great adventure of living in this world. It is in our homes that we learn to smile, talk, and walk. And it is there that the groundwork is laid for everyday living.

Parents as partners of God are also, in a much larger way than we now realize, parents of the souls of our children. There is a Kingdom way for the home. In growing souls and in the development of personalities the home will always have the greatest opportunities and the greatest responsibilities in that glorious everyday task which calls for living the Kingdom way every day in every way.

Another very important factor in the master plan for our everyday life is the way we make a living. Making a living calls for meeting some need -- physical, mental, social, or spiritual -- and involves relationships with others and God. There is a Kingdom way for a farmer to farm. There are laws that have to do with the growing of crops. Alfalfa will not grow on acid soil, that is the law of the Kingdom. If a farmer seeks to know the laws by which crops grow and then conditions the earth so that crops can grow to best advantage, he is a partner in achieving the Kingdom of God. Our gardens will be Kingdom gardens to the extent that we provide good facilities for growing potatoes, cabbages, tomatoes, strawberries, beans, peas, etc. There are laws for all our relationships with, and the use we make of, our natural resources.

There is a Kingdom way for our economic relationships. Our pagan philosophy, which puts profit above personality, is one of the main reasons why such a large percentage of people around the world do not have adequate and proper food and why so many live in slums in the cities or shacks in the countryside. There is a Kingdom way for the relationships of labor and capital, and insofar as the best possible relationship is achieved, the Kingdom of God in this very important part of everyday living will be achieved.

The Kingdom way is best for our schools, our churches, our government. These institutions, as well as other institutions and agencies vital to our modern world civilization, make their best possible contribution toward progress only by obeying the laws of the Kingdom.

The way of the Kingdom of God is the most practical way for the individ-

ual, the home, the church, the school, for government, labor, industry, agriculture, for practical normal living every day in every way. That is true because the heart and core of the Kingdom of God is the will of God. And only as we discover and live in accordance with God's will can we as individuals, families, nations, and races achieve the highest possible level of living.

Some ideas and ideals concerning the Kingdom of God were in existence before Christ came into the world as God's special revelation. The purpose of Christ's coming to live, work, teach, preach, and heal as he did, and his death and resurrection, was to establish firmly in the minds of the disciples, through the fellowship of the church and the Bible, the idea of the Kingdom of God as the master plan for the human race.

Great efforts are being made to bring about better relationships in the world today. Think of what it would mean if the present leadership in America and in the whole world would think of the Kingdom of God as the master plan for the ages, inspiring all people in his name to: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you."

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SOME IMPRESSIONS AFTER THE FIRST MEETING of THE CHRISTIAN RURAL FELLOWSHIP IN INDIA

1. The family is the divinely-appointed unit of human life. Our Christian rural program should be to, for, and through families as units rather than only to men, women, and children as separate persons.

2. The daily work of men and women must be seen by them as God sees it.... In order for their outlook and faith to be Christian, their daily work must be religious and Christian.

3. It is in worship that the affairs of every day become recognized as sacred. Therefore, our habits and modes of worship must reflect the whole range of daily Christian discipleship in the village.

4. Our mandate for a Christian approach to every phase of rural life comes straight from the incarnation and cross of Christ and from the attitude of trusteeship of all resources as recognized by Jewish people in Old Testament times.

5. In present circumstances the Christian movement in village India must, humanly speaking, depend largely on lay initiative. Therefore, we must have the kind program and ministry which will foster lay initiative and leadership.

6. In whatever way this can be best accomplished, it is the church which must interpret, judge, and integrate all phases of the Christian program among rural people, seeking ever to incarnate the concern of God for all of life.

— Dr. Arthur T. Mosher, Principal
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